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INFO NSCE 00,CIAE 00,SSO 00,DODE 00,USIE 00,NSAE 00,CCO 00,SS 35,
GPM 03,GP 05,SC 01,SAH 02,L 03,H 02,SAL 01,IO 21,P 04,NSC 10,
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O R 111330Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4456
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3757
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2134
AMCONSUL DANANG 711

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Joan Zgulony DATE 10/6/81
RDS ☐ or XDS ☐ EXT. DATE _____
TS AUTH. _____ REASON(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ RELEASABLE ☑
RELEASE DENIED ☐
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UNCLAS SAIGON 2868

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FOLLOWING IS EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF TEXT OF LETTER DATED AUGUST 11 ADDRESSED TO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES BY SPECIAL COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION NGUYEN VAN TUONG:

QUOTE: DEAR SIRS, IN REPLY TO YOUR LETTER OF AUGUST 8, 1967, ADDRESSED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE EXPRESSING DESPLEASURE WITH THE RECENT TRIP TO QUANG TRI,

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 2868 UNCLAS
AND IN THE NAME OF THE GOVERNMENT AGENCY CHARGED WITH GENERAL RESPONSIB-
ILITY FOR THE FORTHCOMING PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE-PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS,
I RESPECTFULLY WISH TO REPORT THAT: ELECTION LAW NO. 1/67 OF JUNE 15, 1967, DISTINGUISHED BETWEEN TWO MATTERS: ORGANIZING THE ELECTION AND CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES. WHILE, THE FIRST MATTER IS

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PAGE 02 SAIGON 02868 111411Z

A RESPONSIBILITY ASSIGNED TO THE GOVERNMENT, THE QUESTION OF CAMPAIGNING, IN MY HUMBLE OPINION, MUST BE DECIDED BY THE CANDIDATES THEMSELVES WITH HARMONIOUS COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CENTRAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE AND LOCAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEES CHOSEN BY THE CANDIDATES.

IN ORDER TO ASSIST CANDIDATES WITH MEA S FOR CONDUCTING A CAMPAIGN, LAW NO 1/67 PROVIDED FOR THE NECESSARY FUNDS. EACH LIST WAS ALLOTED 3 MILLION 8 HUNDRED THOUSAND PJASTERS NOT COUNTING MONEY FOR POSTERS AND LEAFLETS.

PART OF THIS SUM MUST BE USED TO COVER EXPENSES FOR FOOD AND TRANSPORTATION DURING THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD.

THEREFORE, THE PROVISION OF TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES SUCH AS MILITARY PLANES, OFFICIAL OR MILITARY VEHICLES, RESULTS FROM THE GOOD WILL OF THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WISHES TO GIVE ADDITIONAL HELP TO THE CANDIDATES, AND IS NOT A SERPICE RERUIRED BY THE

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LAW. NECESSARILY, IN AREAS ON THE FRONT LINE SUCH AS QUANG TRI THE COMFORTS OF TRAVEL CANNOT BE AS ADEQUATE AS IN REAR AREAS AND, IF THERE HAVE BEEN UNDERSIRABLE OCCURRENCES, I RESPECTFULLY HOPE THAT YOU, GENTLEMEN, WILL BE UNDERSTANDING AND CONSIDER THEM INSIGNIFICANT AND UNINTENDED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

RECENTLY, IN ACCORDANIE WITH THE REQUEST OF THE CHAIRMAN OF CENTRAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE, I INFORMED THE PROVINCES OF YOUR REVISED SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS WITH THE VOTERS. CERTAINLY TODAY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR SCHEDULE, THE CITIZENS OF DANANG WAITED BUT DID NOT GET TO MEET YOU BECAUSE YOUR TRIPS HAVE TEMPORARILZ BEEN SUSPENDED.

I WISH TO INVITE YOU TO KINDLY LET ME KNOW CLEARLY YOUR REQUIREMENTS SO THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN, TO THE BEST OF ITS ABILITY, TRY TO HELP YOU IN TIME AND SO AS TO AVOID UNGRATEFUL SENTIMENTS ON THE PART OF VOTERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. (SIGNED) NGUYEN VAN TUONG UNQUOTE.

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FOLLOWING IS DAILY USPAO INTERNATIONAL MEDIA REPORT:

8-11-67

RADIO:
(8/10): NEWS INSERTS - 1. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES COOPERATING & JOINING CAMPAIGN TOUR. 2. CHIEF OF VN GENERAL STAFF SAYS TOOPS MAKING REMARKABLE PROGRESS IN PACIFICATION 3. U.S. NAVY PILOTS SHOT DOWN 2 MIGS-21 OVER NORTH VIETNAM. 4. FORMER VC LT. COL. SAID INCREASING MILITARY PRESSURES FROM ALLIED FORCES IN SVN ARE REFLECTED IN LOWER VC MORALE.: IBS ENGLISH

PAGE 2 RUMSEM 79P UNCLAS
(8/10): NEWS INSERTS - NATIONAL ELECTION: IBS SPANISH
SVN GENERAL ON ARMED FORCES: IBS RUSSIAN BRANCH
REPORTS - 1. KORREAN GEN. IM CHUNG SIK ARRIVED IN VIETNAM TO VISIT KOREAN TROOPS. 2. VIETNAMESE & US MARINES AWARDED MEDALS FOR OPERATION IN DINH TUONGG PROVINCE. 3. REGIMENT 28 OF KOREAN "WHITE HORSE DIVISION" EXHIBITS SEIZED WEAPONS. 4. US 4TH INFANTRY DIVISIO DONATES A CLINIC FOR LEPERS IN PLEI YIT, PLEIKU PROVINCE: IBS VIETNAMESE
UNIVRSITIES IN VIETNAM: IBS CZECHOSLOVAK
"THIS IS VIETNAMBZ MUSIC AND S/E - SCRIPTS. USIS BOGOTA, PUITO USIS TAIPEI

PRESS:
(8/10): 1. CIVILIAN CASUALTIES FROM VC TERRORISM 2. VC TERRORIST ACTIVITY JULY 30 - AUG. 5, 1967. 3. ACTION IN THE

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FAR NORTH.: IPS/IBS/IAF STATE
(8/11): SELECTED ELECTION & COMMENTS FROM THE VERNACULAR PRESS--FRIDAY, AUG. 11, 1967. 2. RETURNEES SO FAR THIS YEAR ALREADY EXCEED LAST YEAR'S TOTAL. 3. RETURNEES IN LAM DONG PROVINCE. 4. BRIEF BATTLE IN SAIGON OUTSKIRTS: IPS/IBS/IAF STATE

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INFO/ACTION

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AGR	COM	FRB
INT	LAB	TAR
TR	XMB	AIR 5
ARMY 3	CIA 20	NAVY 5
OSD 33	USIA 10	NSA 3
STR 2	WH 3	NSC 6

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO: BANGKOK, CINCPAC, DANANG, VIENTIANE

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

FROM : Amembassy SAIGON

DATE: August 12, 1967

SUBJECT : Pre-Election Political Survey of Region III

REF :

INTRODUCTION

1. In the last week of July a coordinated pre-election survey of six populous III Corps provinces was conducted by a trained and experienced Vietnamese survey team under the direction of an Embassy political officer. The twenty-four Vietnamese who conducted the survey have been reporting on popular attitudes in the Region III area to CORDS Region III for seven months. Prior to that time most of these personnel worked in similar or related fields for various Mission agencies for several years.

2. Most of the information reported in this Airgram is drawn from this six-province survey as supplemented by the observations of the reporting officer who has been reporting on political developments in Region III for more than a year. For the purposes of this project, the Vietnamese surveyors were instructed to concentrate on the informed public rather than the townsman-in-the-street or the uneducated villager. The target was the local man of influence: the teacher, merchant, priest, official, officer or notable who plays a vital role in interpreting national events to his less-informed neighbors. In the one-week period approximately 300 respondents were contacted. In no case did the Vietnamese surveyors identify themselves as having any connection with either the United States Mission or the GVN. Rather, they used a number of plausible explanations for their presence in the area and interest in political matters. (Among the most common of these were identifying themselves as reporters or students on vacation.) Although the surveyors, who work in teams of three, were instructed to research certain specific political topics of interest, their assignment was deliberately unstructured. In other words, they made a survey of attitudes and not a poll of the Gallup or Harris variety. The

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Drafted by: POL:DEBrown/kec

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Clearances: POL:TPHDunlop

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Western-style "yes-no" opinion poll works poorly in Viet-Nam, and particularly poorly in rural areas.

3. The information gathered by these CORDS Region III survey teams is believed to be about as reliable as information from Vietnamese sources can be and far superior to that obtained by other polling techniques occasionally employed in Viet-Nam.

Summary: About 60% of the population of Region III are Buddhists or Confuscianists, but they are not as likely to vote as cohesively or in as proportionately large numbers as the other two significant religious groups in the area, the Catholics and the Cao Dai. This is partly because a high proportion of the Buddhist/Confucianist population are villagers living in insecure or semi secure areas, and partly because their formal organization is weak. Only a small fraction identify strongly with their religion. Although a number of leading monks are inclined to the extreme Tri Quang faction of the United Buddhist Association, their ability to mobilize believers for political action appears to be marginal. It is from the Buddhist and Confucianists of Region III that Tran Van Huong, and to some extent Phan Khac Suu, will draw strength.

The approximately 600,000 Northern Catholics are the best organized and most cohesive group. Their leading political organization is the Greater Solidarity Force (GSF) which is solidly on the Thieu-Ky bandwagon. The Tan Dai Viet party, a small elitist group, appears undecided on whom to support in the race but is also largely Northern Catholic in membership and is probably leaning toward the joint military slate (in contrast to other areas where it appears that the slate of Truong Dinh Dzu has Tan Dai Viet support). There is a strong minority current of Catholic support for Tran Van Huong.

The Cao Dai, about 250,000 strong, are well organized but church schisms ensure that the Cao Dai vote will be fragmented. The conservative wing of the church, strong in Tay Ninh province, supports the Thieu-Ky ticket; although they claim wide support, it is not certain that they will even carry Tay Ninh province itself. Some Cao Dai will support Phan Khac Suu and others Tran Van Huong.

A major factor influencing political developments in Region III is the RVNAF officer corps. Most officers find they must balance their loyalty to the Army against competing regional,

religious, and (sometimes), party claims. Loyalties are very often personal loyalties to some superior officer. For these reasons the RVNAF is not monolithically behind the joint military slate, although a majority of officers of course support the two generals.

The civil service, also an important factor, is even less united in its support for the GVN slate. Many, naturally enough, are in principle against the continuation of military government; others belong to one or another political grouping which has its own presidential candidate in the field. Civil servants are, however, subject to propagandizing on behalf of the GVN slate from their military superiors, and those whose sympathies lie with other than the GVN candidates will be quick to interpret this as "pressuring." Indications are that the civil servants' loyalties are split between the Thieu-Ky and Huong-Truyen tickets.

Organized labor has some strength in Region III. CVT leaders appear basically antagonistic to the GVN slate but survey reports reveal a fair degree of support for Prime Minister Ky among the workers themselves.

In the public eye, Ky continues to enjoy considerable popularity while Thieu emerges more colorless. Ky is given credit for energy and honesty; the general situation in the country now is contrasted favorably with that obtaining when he became Prime Minister two years ago, and he gets much of the credit. Thieu is less well-known. Huong has support from intellectuals and some Catholics as well as a substantial number of Buddhists and is widely praised for his integrity and propriety. As elsewhere in Viet-Nam, Phan Khac Suu is viewed as a nice person but rather ineffectual as a political leader. He benefits, especially in Gia Dinh, from the genuine popularity of his running mate, Dr. Dan.

There is little feeling in Region III that the elections will be blatently rigged. Most people, however, assume that the outcome is a foregone conclusion and considerable cynicism is expressed that therefore the elections are relatively meaningless. There is lively interest in, and debate about, the "true" role the Americans are playing in this election. A radical division of opinion is evident between the semi-urban population of Gia Dinh, who appear by and large to accept the Ambassador's statement of impartiality, and people who live further from the capital who believe the United States is compelled to play a partisan role.

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The Area

Six provinces are Gia Dinh, Long An, Bien Hoa, Hau Nghia, Binh Duong and Long Khanh -/the heartland of the 12-province III Corps Tactical Zone. They differ substantially in population, sophistication, security, economy and ethnic and religious composition. They contain eighty percent of Region III's GVN-controlled, or voting, population. Four districts - Go Vap, Tan Binh, Hoc Mon and Thu Duc - of Gia Dinh province along contain a third of the Corps area's population. These four districts are the "suburbs" of Saigon - and thus attitudes in this relatively sophisticated and secure area differ strikingly from those in areas farther from the capital.

2. Political views in the III Corps area, as elsewhere in Viet-Nam, are determined mostly be religion. It is only in the middle and upper strata of the population that occupation, or occasionally party affiliation, plays a significant role.

The People: Religion

a. Buddhists/Confucianists: Although "Buddhist-type" individuals comprise sixty-plus percent of the III CTZ population, a high proportion of them are in insecure or semi-secure areas. Only a small fraction identify strongly with their religion(s). Formal organization, particularly organization of the sort which can be used for political purposes, is weak. It may be that many of the more militant monks are drawn into Saigon, where the climate is more congenial to radical thought and action. Since the Struggle Movement, in a number of important provinces (for instance, Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, Long An, Binh Duong), leading monks have inclined to the Tri Quang wing of the UBA but their ability to mobilize Buddhist believers for political purposes appears yet to be, at best, marginal. The same is true of Tam Chau followers, who are in the ascendency in Bien Hoa and Phuoc Tuy.

Voters in the Buddhist-Confucianist spectrum, then, are not likely to vote as cohesively, or in as proportionately large numbers, as Catholics or Cao Dai. Nonetheless, it is from this group that leading civilian candidates Phan Khac Suu and particularly Tran van Huong will draw a large proportion of their votes. As a middle-aged Bien Hoa merchant noted, "persons in the Buddhist bloc will never vote for the Thieu-Ky ticket, because surely they cannot forget the failure of their struggle last year...On the contrary, I think the refugee Catholics will support [the Thieu-Ky] ticket because the Buddhist and Catholic blocs contradict each other as do fire and water."

b. Catholics: Northern Catholics, about 600,000 strong, are the best organized and most cohesive group in III CTZ. Mostly settled in distinct communities, firmly under the sway of the parish priest, occupying a greatly disproportionate share of official and/or military positions, their influence far exceeds their numbers. The premier political party in the area, the

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Greater Solidarity Forces, (Luc Luong Dai Doan Ket) is almost wholly northern Catholic, and the GSF is on the Thieu-Ky bandwagon, although somewhat unenthusiastically. The Tan Dai Viet party, an elitest group of considerable influence, is also largely northern Catholic in membership and although their allegiance in the presidential race is not clear many appear to be leaning towards Thieu and Ky. (see page 6 a. and b.) Southern Catholics, perhaps 100,000 in all, are strongly backing the Tran van Huong ticket. A strong minority current in northern Catholic ranks also inclines toward Huong, and some Catholic militants are expressing sentiment for old Diemist Tran van Ly.

c. Cao Dai. There are about 250,000 Cao Dai believers in III CTZ, although Cao Dai spokesmen claim many more. The vast majority are of the Tay Ninh variety, although there is an active Ben Tre organization 20,000 strong. in eastern Long An. Although the Cao Dai are often locally well-organized and Cao Dai believers intensely loyal to their creed, schisms within the church ensure that the Cao Dai vote will be fragmented. In addition to the great schism between Tay Ninh and Ben Tre, there are strongly antagonistic factions within the Tay Ninh church. The conservative wing of the church, which controls the Tay Ninh province government and predominates within the Toa Thanh, or Holy See, generally push - in public, at least - the "Unity of Religions Will Save the Nation" line. Their guiding principle appears to be to protect the Church by staying on good terms with the regime in power. This is, generally, the faction of Tay Ninh Cao Dai leaders which did not follow "neutralist" Pope Pham cong Tac into exile in 1956. This group supports the Thieu-Ky ticket and claims to speak "for two million Cao Dai". They in fact speak for some, but by no means all, of the Tay Ninh Cao Dai and it is by no means certain that the Thieu ticket will carry Tay Ninh.

Opposition to the conservatives within Tay Ninh Cao Dai ranks is centered in two vague, interrelated groups, called by Cao Dai the "Ly Khai", or "Departed" and the "Luu Vong," or "Exile" groups. This is the radical wing of the Tay Ninh Cao Dai. "Ly Khai" is the designation used to describe those who followed Pham cong Tac into exile and have subsequently returned to Viet-Nam (mostly after the fall of the Diem regime). Some of them hold GVN positions. The "Luu Vong" are those still in the jungle, or in Cambodia, and in liaison with, if not part of, the NLFSV. According to candid and apparently knowledgable sources in Tay Ninh, the "Ly Khai" and "Luu Vong" enjoy great prestige among the Cao Dai rank and file and a measure of power in the Holy See - enough power to block the election of a conservative "Ho Phap," or, roughly translated, "Pope". These sources, who include the province VIS Chief and the Deputy Youth Chief (protect both sources), say that the radical wing is well organized, and, as might be expected, appeals most to low-level military elements, the young and the idealistic.

Politically, the Ly Khai are said to wish "to create a distinct Cao Dai political identity", holding that cooperation with any regime should be viewed

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only as "a temporary alliance, to be pursued only if profitable to the Cao Dai." It is from this group that Phan khac Suu, who is a Cao Dai, is drawing his considerable support in Tay Ninh and other Cao Dai communities scattered throughout the Corps area.

The newly created "Toan Viet" Bloc, which claims to include leading Cao Dai and to be able to mobilize widespread Cao Dai support, appears to involve only one faction and the reporting officer doubts that it can deliver more than a fraction of the Cao Dai vote.

The People: Political Parties

There are numerous branches of political parties and quasi-parties in province and district towns throughout the Corps. Only two parties, however, have significant "muscle".

a. The Greater Solidarity Force. The GSF has been reported on extensively in the past (see Saigon's A-25, 13 July, and A-76, 30 July 1967). There is little that can be added to the referenced airgrams, which note that, with priestly support, the GSF is able to mobilize staggering percentages of Northern Catholic voters - or demonstrators - in Hau Nghia, Bien Hoa, Long Khanh and parts of Gia Dinh. It has a tight organization which extends down to the parish level, and, at least in Hau Nghia, is associated with the Tan Dai Viet party. The GSF has had no visible success in winning Southern Catholic adherents, although it has wooed that group ardently. GSF leaders in III Corps support the Thieu-Ky ticket, they say, because the generals are the major candidates most likely to carry the war to the North and to keep domestic 'troublemakers' (i.e., Buddhists) in check.

b. Tan Dai Viet Party. The Tan Dai Viet, who have only recently "gone legal" in III CTZ, have revealed an impressive number of well-placed cadre (see Saigon's A-76). It is primarily an organization of civil servants, officers, "notables" and intellectuals, with a large proportion of Catholics. It seems to be attempting to build a mass base, however. The party apparently has no "official" Presidential candidate; TDV have been variously identified as supporting Thieu, Ha thuc Ky, and ~~Tan Dai Viet~~ Truong dinh Dzu. Gossip in Hau Nghia holds that Thieu himself is a TDV partisan. Party cadre are devoting their main effort to boosting three TDV Senate lists - Nos. 13, 14 and 15.

c. VNQDD. Scattered and apparently insignificant "Viet Quoc" branches have been reported in several provinces. Most seem to belong to the "Southern" faction of Nguyen hoa Hiep and to have a predominantly Buddhist coloration. A few branches of the Vu Long Khanh faction have been identified, wholly northern Catholic in membership.

d. Mat Tran Quoc. Gia Khang Chien (National Resistance Front) and Mat Tran Quoc Gia Thong Nhut (National United Front). Little is known about these apparently moribund Cao Dai organizations.

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Occupation and Political Affiliation.

. In addition to religious groups and parties or quasi-parties, certain occupational groups, the foremost of which are the military and the civil service, can be identified as having a distinct political identity.

a. The "Military". The RVNAF officer corps, by virtue of its monopoly of key GVN positions in the Corps, exerts an almost paralyzing influence on political life in remoter areas of III CTZ. In all cases it exercises power which is limited only by the threat of outraged public opinion and its own internal disunity. Most officers find that they must balance their loyalty to the Army with competing regional, religious and, sometimes, party claims. Loyalties within the Army are very often personal loyalties to some higher officer, who in turn looks after their welfare. This conflict of interests is vividly expressed in a reported statement by Captain Hue, the District Chief of Ben Cat, Binh Duong: "I personally support the Huong-Truyen ticket. If Ky were running for President by himself, I'd vote for him, but as he is running second with Thieu, I won't." He disclosed [the report continues] that he had played an important role in helping General Thieu gain the position of Directory Chairman. He had made arrangements with political and religious parties to win their support for Thieu, who, however, didn't return the favor. According to Captain Hue, he should have been promoted to Lt. Colonel by now, at least. For this reason he regards Thieu as "unfaithful".

Prior to the merger of the Thieu and Ky tickets middle grade officers in III CTZ showed themselves greatly agitated by the prospect of having to make a choice between one or the other - a step which many of these officers apparently felt involved laying their careers on the line. When the tickets combined, a sigh of relief went up from district and province chiefs across the Corps area. The great majority of officers will readily support the two generals. "I cannot deny the merit and sacrifices of those in uniform in this critical period of our country's life," observes a battalion commander in Long An. Others are more cynical, nothing that "a lot of soldiers have the idea that they had better take care of the tree that provides them with fruit." It remains to be seen how far the officer corps will go in support of the Thieu-Ky ticket, however. The common soldier will vote for Thieu if he is ordered to, but if he is given a free choice the draftee is likely to vote little differently from the civilian. Likewise, through a few well dropped hints - or threats, the district chief, police chief or RD chief (almost always RVNAF officers) can roll up a big vote for Thieu in the boondocks.

Encouragingly, the RVNAF does not seem to be monolithically behind the two generals. There are occasional dissenters, like the disappointed district chief quoted above, and a number of others who have convincingly indicated to the reporting officer their intention to conduct clean and fair elections, no matter what pressures are placed on them.

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b. The Civil Service. Civil servants are subject to most of the same pressures and conflicts of interest which impinge upon an RVNAF officer. Although few civil servants occupy independent positions of power in the provinces, they are often the mediators, the transmission belts between authority and the people. As a group, civil servants themselves dispose of a considerable number of votes.

province,
Civil servants, broadly defined to include/village and hamlet officials, are far less pro-regime than the officer corps. Many, perhaps most, resent playing permanent second fiddle to the officers who occupy "civilian" positions. Conversely, it seems, if public opinion is any guide, that the civil service is far more susceptible to pressure than the officer corps. The reporting officer has received a handful of reports of alleged "pressuring". A report from Hau Nghia states, for example, "According to a few personnel of the province and village offices, even though civil servants don't want to, they must support the Thieu-Ky ticket. Recently, on 24 July, Government authorities at the center and in the provinces held secret meetings to direct agency chiefs to carry out a scheme with the object of supporting this ticket and dealing with the opposition activities of other tickets." (See also Saigon's A-50).

It is natural to expect that GVN officials are being, or will be, propagandized on behalf of the government slate. Those civil servants whose sympathies lie with other tickets will be quick to interpret this as "pressuring", as seems to have been the case in the situation described in Saigon's A-50. Survey reports from six important III Corps provinces through 2 August uniformly indicate, however, that the educated population had not noticed partisan activity on behalf of any ticket by GVN officials or cadre since the Thieu and Ky candidacies were joined.

The same survey reports are contradictory on the Presidential preference of provincial officialdom. In Gia Dinh and Long Khanh the educated public identifies civil servants as generally pro-Huong; in Bien Hoa, Binh Duong and Long An they are seen as pro-Thieu. Le van Khoai, III Corps Deputy Government Delegate (the senior civil servant in the Corps) may be a bell-wether. Khoai told his American advisor that in ordinary times he would be an enthusiastic supporter of Tran van Huong. He has concluded, however, that at present a non-military regime would be weak and unstable, and thus Khoai lukewarmly supports the Thieu-Ky candidacy.

c. Merchants. There are scattered indications that much of Phan khac Suu's support comes from commercial interests.

d. Labor. The reporting officer's soundings indicate that number of provincial CVT leaders are antagonistic toward the Thieu-Ky ticket, particularly since the Assembly's disqualification of the CVT Senate slate. Survey reports, on the other hand, show that educated opinion in the Corps expects "workers" and "the people" to vote heavily for Thieu and Ky. In part this seems to be based - in the case of those with anti-Government

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sympathies - on the intellectual's cynicism about the "mob" vote. Economic considerations are important, however. As one worker stated, "I just live on my labor, so I'm very afraid of political crises. After the coup d'etat Viet-Nam fell into chaos. No administration could stand firm for five months. Fortunately Mr. Thieu and Mr. Ky have stabilized the situation. I'm afraid that if someone else holds power, crises will occur again."

e. Intellectuals. Educated opinion uniformly assigns the "intellectual vote", which in the provinces seems to consist mostly of teachers, students, priests and the rare professional man, to tran van Huong.

The Public Image of the National Elections

"A few days ago", says a Long Khanh watch repairman, "I went to the village office for a document. While I was waiting, I read the list of the Presidential and Senatorial candidates. One third of the eleven tickets sound familiar to me; the other two-thirds I have never heard of." A priest complains, "Previously there were eighteen tickets. Now there are only eleven but I cannot remember all of them. I feel ashamed for the too big number of presidential candidates...I think four tickets are enough and from now until election day I hope some tickets withdraw - the more the better!"

At the beginning of August, only the Thieu-Ky, Huong-Truyen and Suu-Dan slates could be said to have a "public image" in III CTZ. Of the remainder, only the Ky-Dinh ticket, as a remotely possible dark horse, arouses interest.

a. Thieu-Ky. A large segment of the III CTZ public credits the Ky government with having "stabilized the political situation, ending confusions which were only favorable to the Communists." Perhaps half of the pro-Thieu and Ky statements recorded in the survey emphasize "stability" in some way. The chaos which followed the coup d'etat against Diem still haunts the III CTZ bourgeoisie, particularly Catholics. Ky's statements that he would overthrow an "unworthy" successor regime have been widely noted. The survey is laced with comments like that attributed to the Catholic Bishop of Thu Dau Mot (Phu Cuong) by his private secretary: "the Bishop wants peace for the country, so in his opinion the Thieu-Ky ticket should be supported in order to save the country from confusion, especially in the present difficult situation. The Bishop is simply afraid that if a civilian ticket is chosen, a couple of generals will not agree to serve under it and the situation will be more troublesome than that in 1965. In the present situation, the Bishop feels, national leaders, if they are civilians, must have real authority and reputation vis-a-vis every element of society if they are to succeed. A wholly civilian government is [in the abstract] desirable, but at this moment not imperative." In short, "stability", based on Army support, is the highest trump in the Thieu-Ky ticket's hand. A second trump is the widely-expressed, and perhaps genuine, belief that the Ky government has done more for "the people" than previous governments. "Practically, the Ky government has realized many things that previous governments didn't." "As for the people,

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they said that to date the Ky government has wholeheartedly paid attention to the people in the countryside." "The Ky government is relatively honest, and has helped the poor people." The third trump is Ky's personal image. Ky's flamboyant personality may lose him the votes of some older, more conservative voters, but younger voters seem to consider it a plus. He is "young". "He dares to talk and act." "He is an eloquent and alert chairman. Whatever he says, he does. He has a 'popular' image, unlike the officials of the Diem era." "Mr. Ky has good will and doesn't love power and doesn't stabilize his position. A concrete example was his withdrawal in favor of Thieu."

By contrast, Nguyen van Thieu emerges as wholly colorless. In all six surveys, Thieu is commented on only twice. In Gia Dinh a respondent notes that "the voters cannot criticize General Thieu for anything", and in Long Khanh a civil servant wonders "why most of the people, when talking about this ticket, only mention Mr. Ky, but rarely Mr. Thieu?."

b. Huong-Truyen. The Huong ticket projects a strong image of integrity and propriety. In contrast to the Thieu-Ky ticket, survey respondents indicate, Huong and Truyen possess the virtues traditionally demanded in a Vietnamese leader. In Gia Dinh a number of respondents note: "Huong and Truyen are old [enough] and deserve to lead the nation on the basis of honesty and conduct." In Long An: "Mr. Huong is clearly a statesman. He gains sympathy from the educated element." In Binh Duong a Buddhist nun feels that the Huong-Truyen ticket is "the worthiest. Mr. Huong is qualified, Mr. Truyen is virtuous; they compliment each other and consequently all big things possibly will be achieved." The Deputy Director of the Binh Duong Bo De (Buddhist) High School isn't sure: "Mr. Huong is known to be proper and upright. However, his propriety can't solve the problems of Viet-Nam." A Binh Duong Catholic priest states that the ticket "has proved its integrity and righteousness. [Huong] is a man of no ambition who sacrifices himself for the people's sake."

Huong is remembered as a fairly strong Premier, and Catholics praise his strong stand against radical Buddhist demands. Northern Catholics appear to be worried, however, that a Huong government may "discriminate between North and South." A Bien Hoa civil servant finds Huong's strongest quality is "decisiveness," which he believes is "a virtue really necessary to a leader." On the other hand, the civil servant believed, Huong suffered from "lack of patience."

c. Suu-Dan. Compared to the Thieu-Ky and Huong-Truyen tickets, which have broad support in all of the six provinces surveyed, the Suu-Dan ticket appears potent only in urban Gia Dinh. There, where from a quarter to a third of the Corps' vote is concentrated, the Suu-Dan ticket is likely to do well, and may win a plurality.

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Gia Dinh opinion identifies Suu as "a kind and easy old man, well-known by the people. He has had a good reputation for a long time." On the other hand, he is also viewed as very indecisive. Dan is widely known for his low cost clinic in Gia Dinh and for having "dared to speak out against the Diem regime." He is said to have a "popular" image, and one northern Buddhist notable who supports the ticket identifies Dan as "the pampered child of a great allied power." Both are regarded as "experienced revolutionists," who have suffered for their anti-Diem activity. They are attractive to people who feel that a "southern" government is most "suitable" to represent the country in any dealings with the North. A report from Hau Nghia notes that many of those who supported disqualified candidates, such as Duong van Minh, seem to be turning to Suu. How Suu will do among the Cao Dai is a matter of speculation; Gia Dinh voters, however, almost automatically credit him with "the Cao Dai vote."

Cynicism and Rumors of Election Manipulation

Surprisingly, there appears to be little feeling that the elections will be blatantly rigged. Cynicism about the "ignorant" peasant does appear occasionally, ~~however, as noted above, para. 2d.~~ Adverse comment on the elections centers on three topics, the failure of Thieu and Ky to resign their positions, Ky's threat to overthrow "bad elements" if they are elected, and the disqualification of "opposition" Presidential and Senate tickets. Five Gia Dinh respondents note that the government slate's image will be tarnished whether it wins fairly or unfairly: "it can't escape public opinion's saying that it won the election by fixing it, because it holds power from top to bottom....Probably there will be a political crisis caused by a number of opposition groups and religions." In Hau Nghia there are rumors that the Tri Quang Buddhists are trying to organize anti-Government demonstrations against the disqualification of the Minh and Thanh Presidential tickets and the Tuong and Tai Senate lists. On balance, the survey reports indicate that while the government ticket has lost a fair number of votes by acts or statements which have been regarded as undemocratic, they have gained as many, perhaps more, from those voters who value stability above all else and believe that the election of a civilian candidate would precipitate a crisis. The reports also strongly indicate that a significant segment of educated opinion has already concluded that the elections are unequal and therefore meaningless.

The American Role

With the answer to the big question -- who will win -- already a foregone conclusion in the minds of most politically sophisticated Vietnamese, the liveliest topic of debate is the role that "the Americans" are playing, or might play, in the elections. A radical division of opinion is evident between Gia Dinh voters, who appear to accept the Ambassador's statements of neutrality, and voters farther from the capital, who almost uniformly feel that the United States is compelled to play a partisan role in the election.

In Gia Dinh the survey team summarized the opinion of fifty-six of the eighty-four respondents as follows: "America is a country with a democratic character. Moreover, they live and die with the Vietnamese people and have spilt much blood in Viet-Nam. Therefore, they wholeheartedly try to ensure that the election is successful and has a true democratic character. However, they don't interfere in internal affairs, so we don't see them support any ticket, perhaps in order that the election be honest." Four other Gia Dinh respondents, who believe that candidates Huong or Suu cannot win without American support, suggest that the United States will support one of these tickets because, "with the present trend of internal developments as well as foreign affairs, a civilian government, and especially a southern civilian government, is necessary in order to talk with international and Vietnamese communists."

One northern Catholic merchant, also in Gia Dinh, enters a dissent. Noting that the Americans had realized the necessity for a "legal" government, and thus had urged the government to organize elections, he nevertheless reasons that the Americans support the "two generals" ticket. "The Americans appear to be indifferent concerning the election, not interfering in our internal affairs, but they will support Thieu and Ky because these two figures have sufficient control. Practically speaking, the Americans are not stupid enough to choose other tickets whose policies they don't know clearly, for this can become a two-edged sword. The Americans have learned that whenever a political crisis happens, the allied countries and the Americans meet many more difficulties; in the battlefields the casualties increase. Although the Americans do not like Thieu and Ky very much, they have to support them because of the present situation of Viet-Nam. As Mr. Ky has stated, if he loses the election, the situation will become much more difficult."

Farther from Saigon, in Bien Hoa, Long An, Hau Nghia, Binh Duong and Long Khanh, the American involvement with the GVN is much

more obvious than in Gia Dinh. Large American advisory teams work closely with GVN counterparts and, to many Vietnamese, appear to be the real sources of authority. Almost uniformly, therefore, they assume the United States to be supporting the Thieu-Ky slate. Many are convinced that the ticket which has American support will win, and most, like the Gia Dinh merchant quoted above, seem to believe that the United States has no choice but to intervene behind the scenes. A civil servant in Bien Hoa scoffs, "Only children believe that the Americans don't interfere in the elections. I don't know why they declared that they wouldn't interfere but I do know that they invited the candidates to meet at the Embassy where many things dealing with the national election were declared by the US Government." "In short," notes the Bien Hoa survey team, Bien Hoa respondents believe that American declarations of neutrality are only a ploy "in order to face easily world opinion." The Long An report indicates that people in this embattled Delta province believe that the Americans will support whomever they want to -- probably Thieu-Ky -- and that "is the business of the Americans." A Buddhist monk of Tri Quang leanings hopes the United States will display "a good conscience toward miserable Viet-Nam." A Catholic priest says that the United States can support any candidate it thinks best, "but the important thing is that the American must be decisive." He is seconded by another Catholic in Long Khanh: "The first thing is that the Americans should somehow grasp a policy, a viewpoint, as well as predict which ticket will win, in order to cope with future events. If they don't find and support a ticket which agrees with American policy, how will they react, for example, in case an anti-American ticket wins the election?"

Long Khanh is also ripe with rumors which are apparently spread by partisans of the candidates. Ha thuc Ky cadre, for instance, are claiming American support because Ky "has many parties secretely discussing the upcoming election with a U.S. Brigadier General.... Every evening there is an American who comes to pick him up at his office and take him to an unknown place." Another rumor has the United States supporting the Pham huy Co ticket because "the Americans are presently bogged down in the Viet-Nam war. If they want to terminate this war, they have to ask for French assistance, but they cannot do this directly. Therefore, they will support Mr. Co. because he is pro-French."

A service chief in Binh Duong gives the overwhelming American presence argument a novel twist. "If the Thieu-Ky slate wins," he reasons, "the Americans will certainly respect our national sovereignty. For example, in this period, although those two have only led a temporary government, in this province anytime

the Americans want to do something they ask the opinion of the province chief. If he agrees, they do it; if he doesn't they cancel the project. This powerful nation, which gives us so much aid, behaves like that toward us only because of the skill of our present leaders from top to bottom."

In summary, although American declarations of impartiality appear to have some credibility in Gia Dinh, and probably also in Saigon, the man in the boondocks, who sees a much more direct, and proportionately far larger, American involvement with the GVN. is harder to convince.

The Upper House Election

As might be expected, the Senate lists are much less well-known than the Presidential lists. The most frequent comment is that the senatorial election is like a lottery. Few respondents seem to have made up their minds, and it is impossible to pick winners at this time. The survey reports indicated organized politicking for the Tan Dai Viet lists of Huynh van Ton (No. 15) and Pham Thai (No. 14) and for several northern Catholic lists, particularly the LLDDK list (No. 8) and the Diemist list of Tran van Lam (No. 3). Most of the favorable comment, however, is directed at lists which claim to have a broad, nationalist, but non-partisan character, such as the lists of Huynh van Cao (No. 31), Tran van Do (No. 17), Bui ba Nhan (the "Journalist list, No. 1), and Ngo gia Hy (No. 28).

Conclusion: What the Election Means

A number of comments in the survey reports touch on the possible meaning of the elections for the nation's future. Some observers, as noted above, page 11, consider the election now to be meaningless. Others -- a majority -- confess bewilderment and state that they will have to study the platforms of the civilian candidates before they can make intelligent comments. A number respondents anticipate substantial shifts in the relation on of the candidates before election day.

In general, it may be said that while the peasant o[illegible]s yet uninterested in the coming election, and probab[illegible] himself powerless to affect its outcome, other segme[illegible] namese society, including those who usually take no [illegible]in anything but their own immediate concerns or who do little but criticize and complain, have begun to think seriously about the candidates, the elections, and their possible implications for the future of the nation. Two questions are of paramount impor[illegible] -- preservation of stability and the possibility of progress [illegible] peace.